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ABSTRACT

An important phenomenon of 20th century American society has been the occurrence of radical shifts in birth rate, fertility rate, and the number of births. This paper is the first of three which explore the relationship between changing proportions of youth in our society and the social, psychological, political, and economic impact of such changes. As background to a theoretical statement, the paper first presents demographic information for the United States from 1910 to 1979. Included are trend data on population growth, number of births, birth and fertility rates, and number and percent of youth in the population. The paper then presents a statement about the relationship between rapid changes in the size and proportion of a population group (demographic discontinuity) and psycho-social phenomena in society. It is suggested that whenever major demographic discontinuity exists between successive cohorts of youth, there will be substantial change in the interaction among youth and between them and the remainder of society. It is proposed that when there are rapidly increasing numbers in the youth cohorts there will also be more likelihood of stress between youth and society, social disturbances, and group-oriented youth behavior. In the case of decreasing numbers in the youth cohorts, there is likaly to be less interest in youth by society, more individual expression of social concerns by youth, and greater individual anger and frustration. (Following the above theoretical statement, a postdictive section of the paper views the statement in relation to past and current demographic and social trends and a predictive section suggests the impact that these changes may have on society and its institutions.) (Author/AV)

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DEMOGRAPHIC DISCONTINUITY:

Social-Psychological Implications of Rapid Changes in the Size of the Youth Population

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A remarkable social phenomenon of twentieth century American society has been the occurrence of radical shifts in birth rate, fertility rate, and the number of births. Following a pattern of steady decline that began prior to the 1920's, the U.S. birth and fertility rates began to rise in the late 1930's, and then in the early and middle 1940's these rates accelerated considerably. Following World War II, in the late 1940's and 1950's, there was such an explosion in number of births that the phenomenon was termed a "baby boom." Beginning in the early 1960's, however, the number of births began a dramatic and steady decline which continued into the middle 1970's with some indication in 1977 and 1978 of a reversal and an end to the decline.

During the middle and late 1960's, the youth of the early years of the baby boom were coming of age and resulted in an exceptionally rapid increase both in the number of youth and in the percent that they were of the total population. Simultaneously, the country was involved in rights issues at home and controversial military actions abroad. The government and its primary institutions, including colleges and universities, became the target of widespread dissent from an unexpected source--the nation's youth. That such strong youthful disaffection was not widely predicted is evidenced by a comment of Kenneth Keniston from his book, Youth and Dissent (1971):

> . . .no event in this decade-the 1960's-was more significant than the rise of a youthful opposition--a dissenting order of the young, a counterculture of the educated, privileged children of the American dream, who found the society they were to inherit failing and flawed. The emergence of this opposition was totally unexpected (p.v).

Keniston attributes the rise of this activism and dissent by youth to the result of the "the interaction of individual personalities, in all their complexity, depth, and changeability with the new social, cultural, and education condition." Coleman (1974) on the other hand, suggests that any significant increase in the proportion of youth in a society will in itself cause "large and pervasive problems" of socialization. This assertion is supported by Moller's historical analysis (1968) in which he described the relationship between increasing proportions of youth and their heightened political activity. Maehr (1978) further suggests that population shifts may well have major effects on achievement motivation of youth.

Social institutions in the 1960's and early 1970's, most notably schools, colleges, and universities, responded to the increased proportion of young people by adding staff and expanding programs and services. Today, however, these same organizations are experiencing the impact of declining numbers of births which started in the early 1960's. Fewer children are entering the public schools and enrollments of colleges and universities are leveling off, preparatory to projected declines for the 1980's and 1990's. Institutions as a result are now faced with issues related to the management of decline (Boulding, 1975).

Little attention has been given beyond rather simple economic concerns to the potential impact of the declining proportion of youth in our society. What will be the social, psychological, political, and economic impact of such a dramatic social phenomenon? What will be the educational and employment priorities of the youth who do seek additional education beyond high school? How will youth feel about themselves and how will they interact with each other and with society? The answers to these and similar questions have only begun to be investigated. Furthermore, research is needed on the

impact of abrupt increases in the youth population, for such increases now are taking place in other countries and may occur again in our own (Easterlin, 1978).

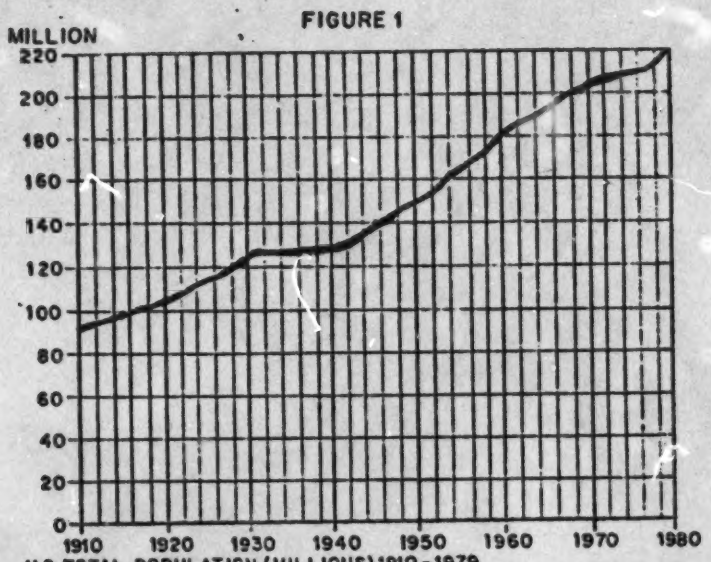
Not only has there been little research concerning the potential social, psychological, and political impact of changes in the size and proportion of the youth population on society (Elder, 1977), there has been no theoretical framework to give perspective to this phenomenon. Yet such a framework is essential to provide both the stimulus and appropriate guidance for such research. The present undertaking offers a preliminary theoretical framework against which a number of questions and hypotheses can be examined.

Analysis of U.S. Demographic Information

Certain minimal background demographic information is necessary as a basis for presentation of the theoretical framework. Included in this information are trend data concerning population growth, number of births, birth and fertility rates, and number and percent of youth in the populations.

Figure 1 shows U.S. population growth from 1910 to 1979. Note that the population in the United States more than doubled during this 70 year period, with the most rapid growth occurring following World War II.

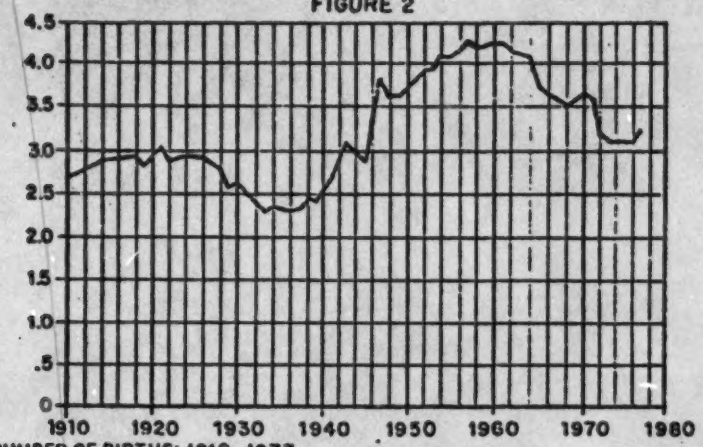
FIGURE 1



U.S. TOTAL POPULATION (MILLIONS) 1910-1979
SOURCE: HISTORICAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S., COLONIAL TIMES TO 1970, PART I (1910-1970). CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, SERIES P-25, #704, TABLE 1 (1971-1975) AND TABLE 2 (1976-1979).

The second figure contains a graph of the number of births, in millions, between 1910 and 1977. There are several aspects of this graph that are of some historical interest. The first is that the decreased birth numbers usually associated with the depression years did not begin during the economic depression of the 1930's, but in the mid-twenties. Note the continuous decrease in number of births from 1924 through 1932. An even more pertinent period for this discussion is that of the last thirty-five years. The trend during that period began with a sharp increase in the forties and early fifties, a leveling from 1954 to 1962, and then an abrupt decrease which extended through 1972 followed by a leveling to 1976. 1977 once again showed an increase. Whether this increase will be a single year phenomenon as in 1970 or a more extended increase remains to be seen.

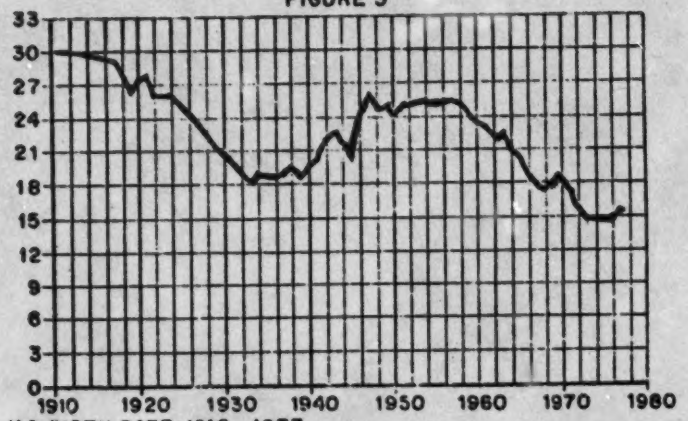
FIGURE 2



NUMBER OF BIRTHS: 1910-1977
SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S. VOL. I, TABLE 1-2 (1910-1975)
MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT, ANNUAL SUMMARY
FOR THE U.S. 1977 (VOL. 26, #13, DEC. 7, 1978) TABLE A
(1976-1977)

The third figure shows the birth rate--the number of births per 1000 people in the population--for the seven decades from 1910 to 1977. In some ways, this graph appears similar to the graph of births; in other ways it is different. For example, note that the birth rate was higher from 1910-1914 than it ever has been since--even in the mid-1950's. Note also that the birth rate was undergoing a fairly steady decrease for a full fifteen years before the depression struck. In a sense, this earlier trend makes the birth rate increase of the 1940's and 1950's even more remarkable than it frequently is considered to be, for that increase represented a major break with the historical trend in birth rate in this country and in other industrial nations.

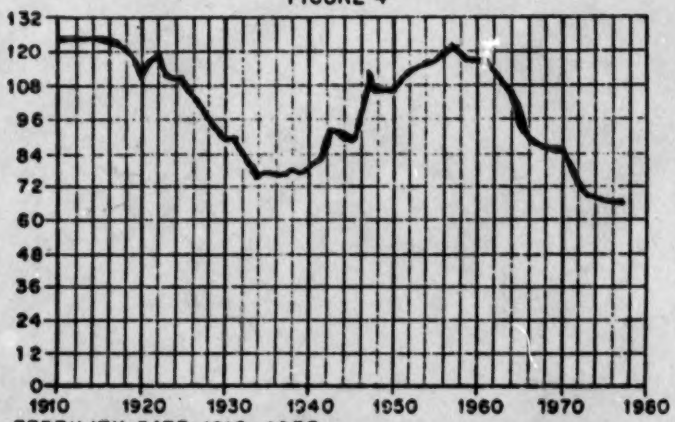
FIGURE 3



U.S. BIRTH RATE: 1910 - 1977
SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S., VOL. I, TABLE 1-2 (1910-1975); MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT, ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR THE U.S., 1977 (VOL. 26 #13, DEC. 7, 1978) TABLE A (1976-1977).

Figure 4 shows the fertility rate history--number of births per 1000 women of child bearing age--from 1910-1977. This pattern is very similar to the one for birth rate, except that the fertility rate of the 1950's more nearly approximated that of the 1910's than was true for birth rate. The reason for this difference in birth and fertility rate patterns, of course, was the disproportionate number of persons in the baby boom years who had not reached child-bearing age by the 1950's.

FIGURE 4



FERTILITY RATE: 1910 - 1977
SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S., VOL. I, TABLE 1-2 (1910-1975); MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT, ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR THE U.S., 1977 (VOL. 26 #13, DEC. 7, 1978) TABLE A (1976-1977).

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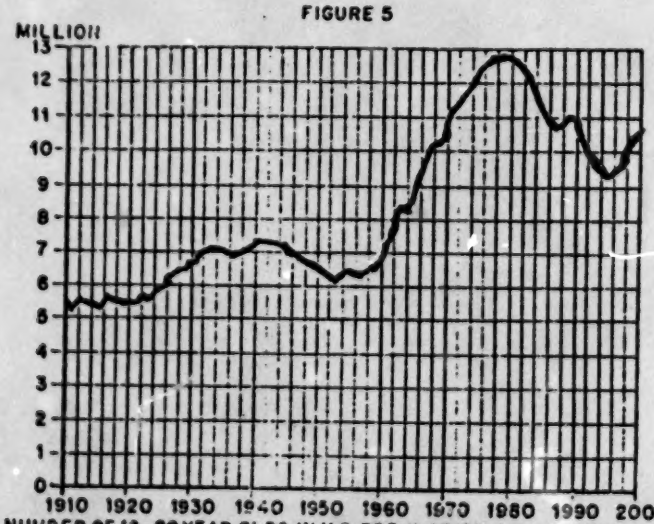
Figures 5 and 6 give information of a somewhat different nature from that given Figures 2-4. Figures 5 and 6 deal with the size of one sub-group in the U.S. youth population over a ninety year period from 1910 to 2000. The specific group in the youth population selected for this discussion, 18-20-year-olds, was chosen primarily because it represents the first years in the employment force and the underclass years in college. Figures 5 and 6 contain information about the number and proportion of 18-20-year-olds in the population during this time span. Note that the general shape of the graph in Figure 5 is similar to that for the number of births, except it has been time-adjusted. Furthermore, the three-year accumulation accentuates both the height of the peak and the pitch of its incline and decline. Consider especially two portions of the curve: first the trough in the 1950's which represented the youth group that formed the so-called "privatistic" or "silent" youth group (Keniston, 1971). Second, note the youth group encompassed by the years 1960-1972. The oldest members of that group were twenty-four years old at the time of Berkeley--1964. The youngest in the group thus encompassed were 16 years of age in 1970--the Kent State year.

FIGURE 5



NUMBER OF 18-20 YEAR OLDS IN U.S. POPULATION (MILLIONS)
SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S., VOL. I, TABLE 1-2 (1910-1970); CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, SERIES P-25, #704, JULY 1977. (1971-1975) AND #601, OCT. 1975. (1976-2000).

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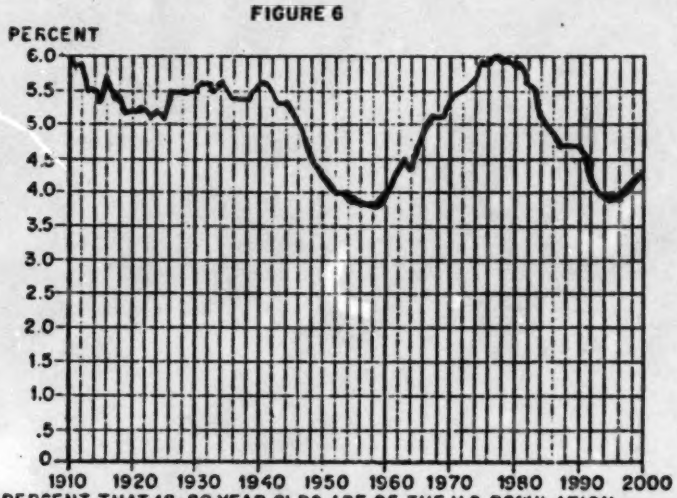
Figure 6 shows the percent that 18-20-year-olds were of the population for this same time span, i.e., 1910 to 2000. Note the two major differences between this figure and the preceding one (Figure 5) which showed number in the age group. When considered as a percent of the population, 18-20-year-olds were a rather high, stable 5.5 percent from 1910 to the mid 1940's. Then, with the rapidly increasing number of babies combined with their own decreased numbers, 18-20-year-olds began to drop precipitously as a percent of the total population. The remainder of this graph is, of course, very similar to the one showing numbers of youth.

FIGURE 6



PERCENT THAT 18-20 YEAR OLDS ARE OF THE U.S. POPULATION
SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS OF THE U.S., VOL. I, TABLE 1-2 (1910-1970); CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, SERIES P-25, #704, JULY 1977. (1971-1975) AND #601, OCT. 1975. (1976-2000).

Rationale for the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework being proposed in this paper is based upon a general view of society and social institutions and the nature of what takes place when an abrupt quantitative discontinuity occurs in the youth cohort. This view is as follows:

A society's institutions--their personnel, their facilities, their methods of operation, their norms, traditions, and attitudes--are organized to accommodate a given size of clientele. When the numbers of clientele change, institutions must also change. In a period of rapidly increasing or rapidly decreasing numbers of clientele, unusual stresses are placed on institutions to meet the change in numbers of those who require services. Furthermore, every society is characterized by a certain amount of inertia which provides stability and order. This inertia restricts the ability of a society's institutions to respond quickly or reallocate resources to meet abrupt changes in the size of an age group. This is particularly true when the age group is children or youth, since these persons are consumers rather than producers. An increase in the number of children and/or youth has the double negative impact of increasing the burdens on society's producers and bringing about a relative underfunding of institutions designed to serve them, e.g., schools, day care facilities, summer camps, police departments and libraries. The more rapid the increase, the more stress that is placed on producers and organizers. On the other hand, when there is a decrease in the number of children and youth, the relative burden becomes lessened and a relative overfunding occurs in those institutions intended to serve them. This in turn results in a higher adult to youth ratio in such institutions.

Almost invariably, an increase or decrease in number and proportion of youth in the population results from changes in family size. The role of the family as a primary unit responsible for socialization is altered as family size increases or decreases. It follows that as family size increases, the financial and social-psychological stress

on adult family members increases; as size decreases, the burden and the stress are lowered. More important perhaps is the effect of this change on adult-child relationships. As the number of children in a family unit increases, less adult time is available for each child and thus the influence each child has in the family structure is lessened. As the number of children per family decreases, however, there is more adult time available for each individual child and therefore greater attention is given to and greater influence is exerted by each child in the family.

In a society, a change in the size of any age group results in greater or less attention being paid to that group by the balance of the population. For example, in our society, television advertisers adjust their campaigns to serve the larger purchasing group. Greater or lesser attention is also reflected in emphasis in legislation, institutional programming, and other cultural phenomena.

Related to the attention that is given to an age group is the power or influence which that group possesses. Within any society a subtle balance of power exists among the various age groups. This balance is related to a number of elements, with one of the most crucial being the relative size of the groups. When there is a substantial increase or decrease in the size of any age group, a change in the balance of power likely will occur. For example, following World War II, when the servicepersons returned home, there was an enormous flow in power to that age group. What was less apparent, but probably equally valid, was a flow of power from that age group when they effectively left society in large numbers several years earlier in entering the service.

This issue is dealt with indirectly in two separate chapters of The Dynamics of University Protest (Light & Spiegel, 1968). In their chapters on "The Origins and Future of University Protest" Laufer and Light state that on most campuses the issues became "small stuff", e.g. parietals, bad food and administrative censorship of student publications, thus suggesting that the student/administration conflict was not always over larger moral issues. Then in their chapter "Point and Counterpoint. . ." Levin and Spiegel (p. 38) state "Most onlookers . . . agreed on the essentially political nature of student activism--its basic involvement with questions of power and strategy . . .." If the issues in the student protests of the sixties were not largely over the great moral issues of the day, the suggestion that they involved essentially power and politics becomes quite tenable. Furthermore, when the two ideas are viewed together, they support the notion that testing of relative power, with some shifting of the balance, may have been at the heart of the struggle. If the issues in these conflicts was food and parietals, why should this conflict have not occurred either earlier or later? Our argument is that the changing demography pattern was crucial to the timing. This argument is supported by Moller (1968, p. 256), "Irrespective of social and economic conditions, an increase in the number of youth in any society involves an increase in social turbulence."

When the increase in size in any one age group is rapid, the shift in power also can be fast and thus pose a significant threat to the power of those age groups whose relative size is decreasing. When there is a rapid increase in the numbers of the youth group, with a resultant increase in attention and power, the rest of society tends to become uneasy and to respond with increased attempts to exert control. This repressive response in turn results in youth developing an even stronger group identity, responding more cohesively and accepting less responsibility for individual actions. Conversely, when

a relative decrease in the size of a given group shifts power to other groups, there is a tendency for an increase in individual actions and assumption of greater individual responsibility by group members.

Given both the demographic data previously discussed and the statement of rationale it appears useful at this point to present a preliminary theoretical statement. This statement with its related corollaries represents a series of ordered relationships between demographic and social-psychological phenomena evidenced in American society. It attempts to postulate some major effects of demographic discontinuity occurring when there is an abrupt increase or decrease in the number of births in a society. The statement is as follows:

Whenever major quantitative discontinuity exists between successive cohorts of youth, there will be a substantial change in the nature of the interaction among youth and between them and the remainder of society. This change will in turn have lasting effects both on the youth themselves and on society.

(1) The most pronounced level of distress between youth and society will be present during the early years of a quantitatively discontinuous trend in youth cohorts. As the rise (fall) in size of successive youth cohort is maintained, youth and society will accommodate to this new form of stability.

(2) Substantial social disturbances, reflecting distress between youth and the remainder of society, will not occur in the absence of major quantitative discontinuity between successive cohorts of youth.

(3) Positive quantitative discontinuity, i.e., a rapidly increasing size in the youth cohort, will be associated, in the beginning phases, with group oriented social disturbances. There will also be more socially unapproved acting out behavior, e.g., more delinquency.

(4) Negative quantitative discontinuity, i.e., a rapidly decreasing size in youth cohort, will be associated, in the beginning phases, with individual expression of social concerns and with greater evidence of anger and frustration directed at self, e.g., more suicides and more symptoms of anxiety and depression.

(5) Society will react initially with fear and concern to the initial phase of a major positive quantitative discontinuity in youth cohort.

(6) If circumstances permit, society will ultimately react constructively, e.g., with social legislation, to a major positive quantitative discontinuity in the youth cohort.

(7) Society as a whole will react with relative disinterest toward youth as a group during periods of major negative quantitative discontinuity in the youth cohort.

(8) Those members of society directly responsible for individual young persons will respond to them by attempting to increase quality of individual opportunity during periods of major negative quantitative discontinuity in the youth cohort.

APPLICATION

Although the theoretical statement was developed from consideration of demographic, social, and historical events in the United States, it also seems appropriate to discuss how it applies to these events. The following discussion of application is broken into two sections--postdictive and predictive. The postdictive section views the statement in relation to past and current demographic and social trends, whereas the future section uses population predictions and suggests the impact that these changes may have on society and its institutions.

Postdictive Application

When considering the numbers of youth in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 20, the period from 1910 to 1980 can be divided into two distinct parts--the years before and following 1960. The years from 1910 to 1960 were typified by an absence of major quantitative discontinuity. The fluctuations in numbers of 18-20-year-old youth were relatively minor and the changes were slow. The theoretical statement predict relatively little overt, group oriented youth-adult conflict.

The 1920's is the first decade in which there was common reference to a "generation gap"; youth was considered a distinct, and at times a somewhat disturbing, element in society. The youth of this period did not participate in social movements in opposition to adults, however; in fact, there was remarkably little social awareness or political activity among youth during the 20's (Draper, 1967). With the exception of some organized campus protest in the mid-twenties related to peace issues and the Sacco-Vanzetti case (Lipset, 1972; Braungart, 1975), youth rebellion was primarily to challenge adult social standards, reflected in their dress, language and social behaviors. Fass (1977) has suggested that this rebellion was not really a youth-adult conflict, but the beginning of a shift in the social behavior of all of the society. Youth of the 1920's for the most part held values remarkably akin to those of their parents.

During the 1930's the nation was mired in an economic depression. Employment for young people was essentially unavailable. Thousands, disenchanted with the capitalistic system, joined the socialist movement and radical student groups. Still there were not related, overt social disturbances of national magnitude which pitted youth against adult society. Instead, the radical youth organizations for the most

part were campus derivatives of adult organizations with similar aims and programs (Block, Haan, Smith, 1976). The statement explains this absence of major youth versus adult conflict as it suggests that overt disturbances will not occur in the absence of major positive quantitative in the youth cohort. Major positive quantitative discontinuity did not occur in the thirties. Thus, despite the hopelessness and frustration experienced by youth during that period, it was not a time for major organized dissent by youth.

The 1950's has often been noted as a particularly quiet period for the nation's youth; in fact, the youth of that decade are often referred to as the "silent generation." While there was not a significant decrease in the numbers of youth during this period, it is noteworthy that there was a dramatic decrease in the percentage of youth as part of the total population (see figures 5 and 6). This decreased percentage of youth within society may help to explain the fact that the 1950's cohort of youth was as silent as it was.

A dramatic reversal occurred in the 1960's with a sharp increase in the numbers of 18-20-year-old youth. The theory would predict major problems in socializing this rapidly increasing youth cohort and as a result that there would be a substantial degree of overt conflict between youth and adult society.

It is frequently assumed that the great increase in number of births took place following World War II and that the dramatic, positive quantitative discontinuity of 18-20-year-olds began in the middle to late 1960's. Based on this assumption, we initially were perplexed by the early onset of youth-adult conflict--e.g. Berkeley-1964. However, it is apparent from the data that the increase in births, which is so frequently referred to as the post World War baby

boom, actually began just prior to 1940. Thus, there was a substantial increase in the 18-20-year-olds beginning in the early 1960's. The student disturbances which began in the early to mid 1960's were led by the persons born in the early 1940's and might reasonably have been predicted from the theory.

Although American society responded initially in the 1960's with fear and concern to the rapidly increasing numbers of youth, ultimately society's reaction reflected an attempt to respond to pressure from youth. For example, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, the military draft was eliminated, and major federal legislation for education was enacted. Such societal actions are consistent with the theory.

Predictive Application

In the 1980's this country will experience an unprecedented period of negative quantitative discontinuity, at least from a numerical standpoint, in the youth cohort. Although the theoretical statement is at this point only preliminary, it should be of value to make at least a few predictions, which can be revised later if necessary. The following predictions are presented primarily to illustrate the implications of the work in which the authors are engaged.

The first general prediction is that as the U.S. moves to a period of negative discontinuity, there will be a decrease in overt behavior directed against society. This implies a decrease in gang or group delinquency, in overtly hostile student disturbances, in burning and looting, etc. Individual acts of delinquency may remain stable or even increase. At the same time, there will be an increase in anger and frustration directed inwardly. Thus, it would be predicted that there will be increased symptoms of anxiety and depression and an increased number of youth suicides. (The increase in youth

suicides is the opposite of a prediction by Easterlin 1978.) There also will be more emphasis on individual initiative and less interest in development of groups. The trend toward individual action and responsibility will occur because of the dramatic shift of power away from the rapidly decreasing youth cohort as a group. At the same time, it is predicted that there will be increased feelings of individual power and personal responsibility as a result of being a member of certain crucial social groupings which are decreasing in size and in which the individual receives greater attention and becomes relatively more influential and powerful--e.g., smaller families (less than two children per family) and smaller classes in school (a reduction of 20 to 25 percent in pupil to teacher ratio). There will also be increased pressures for higher performance brought about by lower child to adult ratios.

The second general prediction is that society in general will give less attention to youth in the 1980's than it did in the early seventies. For example, the period of the 1980's should see an increasing disenchantment with the youth culture. Instead of people in their forties and fifties minicking behavior of those in their late teens and early twenties, the focus will be on the behaviors of those who are in their thirties, for that is where the vanguard of the population bulge will be.

The third general prediction suggests that with the youth cohort decreasing in size and with society geared to provide for large cohorts, there will be increased quality of opportunity available for the smaller youth cohorts. Emphasis on quality of opportunity will be apparent both in those aspects of life financed and provided by society in general, e.g., smaller pupil to teacher ratios and in pro-

grams for the gifted in public schools, and in those aspects financed and provided by the family, e.g., a greater tendency to provide for a prestige education at the post-secondary level. It is predicted that, because of this emphasis on quality, post-secondary institutions having a reputation for quality academic program will not suffer as dramatic reversals in the 1980's as sometimes predicted even though educational costs may be substantially higher to parents. Conversely, those post-secondary institutions having a reputation for low quality programs will suffer doubly.

A fourth prediction refers to the opportunities and aspirations that will be available to these same people after they have completed their education. It has been suggested that the greatly increased number of youth that were educated during the 60's and early 70's will result in reduced social mobility, changed patterns of promotion and job changes and reduced opportunity for rapid job success (Freeman, 1976). Those members of the cohort with decreased numbers will be faced with even more limited opportunities for career advancement, since their immediate job supervisors will be part of the large cohort just older than themselves. Freemen predicts that this will result in potential intergenerational conflicts at the workplace and possible political extremism on the part of those whose aspirations are not being met. Based upon our theoretical statement, we would also propose that these conditions would lead to increased individual frustration, as evidenced by increased suicides, depression, and mental health problems. We may also see a turning away from work as a major means of satisfaction since so many people will no longer be able to use that avenue for self-fulfillment.

The final prediction for the 1980's is unlike the other predictions; it does not deal with persons who will be 18-20-years-old during the

1980's, but rather with those who were 18 to 20 between 1960 and 1972--from the vanguard at Berkeley to the observers at Kent State.

Before making this final prediction, it is important to make reference to a 1970 article by Phillip Abrams, "Rites de Passage: The Conflict of Generations in an Industrial Society." In this article, Abrams refers to four analytically distinct social formations: (1) the age span, (2) the age group, (3) the generation unit, and (4) the generation. The age span is always present, the age group occurs less frequently; and the generations, as defined by Abrams, is rare.

The age span is a definable space in the life cycle, e.g., infancy, childhood, adolescence. Although it would not meet Abram's technical definition, our 18-20-year-old grouping, built as it is around the early post secondary experiences, is at least analogous to an age span.

An age group is a particular set of individuals in a given age span which develops--"when the community of interests of that group crystallizes in the form of a collective consciousness of shared values and roles, a deliberate, collective working-up of an age-related identity based on concrete interactions among peers. . ." As persons leave an age span, they abandon the attitudes and behaviors of the age groups.

Of the generation, Abrams say,

> . . .A generation represents a more fundamental freezing of consciousness. Here we are dealing with groups of age contemporaries who have associated their age not with fashion but with history; who in response to events or situations experienced by them in a given age span not only repudiate norms established by their senios but carry that repudiation with them through life and seek to transmit it to their successors. Age-groups are ephemeral and leave culture fundamentally untouched; generations endure and transform culture. The consciousness of a generation is both more exclusive than that of an age group, and it is carried forward beyond the bounds of age spans, age groups, and, in principle, the life cycle.

And a generation unit, Abrams says,

> . . .it is usually the case that some members of an age span experience historical events much more acutely than others; they will be more directly exposed to events or more capable of giving them age-related meaning than their peers. And where such minorities have opportunities for mutal communication and association they may become the articulators of new perspectives for their age span as a whole - the class of 1938 in the Egyptian Military Academy would be an example. These minorities who serve as the vanguard of generations and potential generations constitute what Mannheim called generation units. The point of importance about such units is that their location in the social system cannot be adequately specified on the basis of age alone. Age is necessary but not sufficient condition for their development.

Now, the final prediction. A subset of persons coming from those who filled the 18-20-year-old age span in this country between 1960 and 1972 ultimately will prove to a generation unit. The entire set either will constitute a generation or will be the front runners of such a grouping. This group now is in a quiescent period brought on by financial and personal responsibilities. As these responsibilities become less restrictive or at least of less immediate importance, a coalescence of thinking and action once again will take place in the group. They will mobilize and, in the positions or power which they will occupy, they will run the country. The vigor of that group, depending on national and world conditions, will be realized either in a significant contribution to society or in social revolution and upheaval. This process will begin between 1980 and 1990 as this group of persons--the vanguard of our present quantitative discontinuity--moves in large numbers into their late thirties and forties.

Concluding Statement

In this paper we have reviewed the well-known demographic phenomena related to the rapidly changing birth and fertility rates, the number of births, and the consequent changes in numbers and proportions of youth in the United State's population. Because it seems likely that these rapid changes in number and proportions in the youth

population may have important social and psychological consequences, we have proposed a preliminary statement of theory to describe such causal relationships. We then used the theoretical statement to explain past and present events and to project future developments.

At this stage, the theoretical statement must be considered quite tentative both because it has not been interwoven with any major human development or sociological theories and because it has not been tested against data or events other than those used directly or indirectly in its development. These are major tasks of the immediate future. They will be addressed and reported and the theoretical statement will be refined, extended and revised or rejected as required by additional information.

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